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Editorial

That Hidden Billion

For 20 years the Central Intelligence Agency has guarded its super-secret operations through the "need-to-know" concept.

Briefly, this means that unless there is a demonstrated "need-to-know" on the part of others, the CIA has no "need-to-explain." What's my business remains my business until you can prove it's also your business.

So far Congress has been unable to prove to the satisfaction of the President or intelligence officials that the CIA's business is any concern of the lawmakers. Yet demands for congressional investigations go back more than a decade.

Two reasons chiefly are spurring the latest demands on Capitol Hill that the CIA be probed.

The first is policy. Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy, a liberal Minnesota Democrat who this week proposed the formation of a special Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee to check into the CIA, cited what he called "significant evidence that the CIA not only carries out policy, but in some respects it has become a positive and significant influence on the policy itself."

Since the CIA reports directly to the President, it is highly unlikely that meaningful information would not tend to influence presidential decisions. Otherwise the CIA would be failing to serve its full purpose.

The second reason is money. Veteran legislators pointed out this week that more than \$1 billion has been buried in the latest proposed federal budget to cover CIA activities. Money would

be funneled into the CIA through other agencies.

It goes without saying that \$1 billion is a lot of money. It is enough to run every department of the County of Los Angeles, with more than 40,000 employes, as well as providing for all of the county's welfare needs. And needless to say the county has been under fire for spending so much. It is a lot of money especially to hide.

Yet hidden or not, it obviously is infinitesimal compared to sums spent by Communist countries for intelligence.

Objections to disclosing the CIA's activities are obvious. How can an organization that deals in spy networks and international intrigue hope to succeed if it has to "tell all" to members of Congress who don't even have to undergo security clearances?

None of the CIA's directors — Allen Dulles who headed it longest, nor the two "local" men, John McCone of San Marino and Admiral William F. Raborn Jr. of Pasadena, the present director — has been inclined toward opening the doors for snoopers.

Nevertheless, the would-be congressional investigators, as keepers of the public purse, feel they have a right to know where the money is going and, within reason, how it is being spent.

A limited investigation by a Senate subcommittee, meeting behind closed doors and sworn in advance to secrecy, could serve a useful purpose if only to review the CIA's administrative budget. A partial probe might bring improvements if only by putting the CIA higher on its toes.